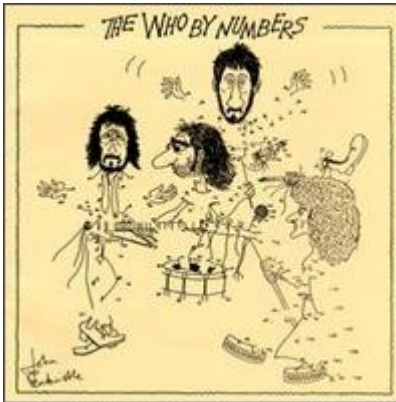


The Who By Numbers



Roger Daltrey: Vocals
John Entwistle Bass Guitar & Vocals
Keith Moon: Drums
Pete Townshend: Guitar, Keyboards & Vocals

Reissue Produced & Remixed by Jon Astley & Andy Macpherson.
Original recording produced by Glyn Johns at the Shepperton Sound Stage on Ronnie Lane's Mobile Studio.
Remastered by Bob Ludwig.
Reissue Executive Producers: Bill Curbishley, Robert Rosenberg & Chris Charlesworth.
Management Bill Curbishley, Trinifold Management Ltd.

Nicky Hopkins: Piano

Design and Art Direction by Richard Evans.
Cover Drawing by John Entwistle.
Liner Notes by John Swenson.

Special Thanks to George McManus, Andy McKaie, Joe McMichael and Ross Halfin.

The Who By Numbers was originally released as
Polydor 2490 129 on October 18, 1975.
It reached #7 in the U.K.
Released in the U.S. as MCA 2161 on October 25, 1975, it reached #8.
The first vinyl pressings in both the U.K. and the U.S. were individually numbered on the back cover.



New Bingley Halls, Stafford, October 3, 1975
Chris Walter/ Photofeatures

THE WHO BY NUMBERS

by John Swenson

Even the world's greatest rock band has its tough moments, and The Who was suffering through more than its share as Pete Townshend, Roger Daltrey, Keith Moon and John Entwistle celebrated their tenth anniversary as a band. The ensuing album *The Who By Numbers*, may well have been the most modest undertaking of the original lineup's career, but it is the key to understanding, the group at a turning point in its history and in its own way showed The Who how to go on just when it seemed that the band might fall apart.

The Who By Numbers was the last recording released before Moon's death — the drummer would never perform any of the *Who Are You* material live. Moon had been in failing health due to years drug and alcohol abuse, collapsing on stage during the *Quadrophenia* tour. Townshend's physical condition had also deteriorated to the detriment of the band's live performances. During the making of the album Townshend, whose songs defined the band's identity, and Daltrey, whose vocals articulated it, engaged in open warfare in the British press. In addition, the band was in the process of severing ties with its original managers, and refused to record for its own label, Track records.

The result of all this turmoil was the most brutally hottest recording The Who ever made, full of bitter self analysis from Townshend as he found himself turning 30 and being mocked by his own declaration "I hope I die before get old."

Townshend's writing by *The Who By Numbers* was in stark contrast to the work he had been attempting on previous Who albums beginning with the rock opera *Tommy*, the unrealized multi-media Lifehouse project, which yielded *Who's Next*, and the ambitious, impossible to-perform *Quadrophenia*. The songs here are very personal, a looking forward to Townshend's solo song writing style dealing with the contradictions of becoming an adult while still attempting to live out the rock and roller's lifestyle.

Townshend's resolution to the contra-diction in 'However Much I Booze,' one of the central songs on *The Who By Numbers*, is resignation to the fact that "*There ain't no way out.*" His self-revulsion is clear throughout the song as he calls himself a habitual liar, "*a faker... a paper*

clown.” The partying and drinking that allowed him to ignore this hated vision of himself in the past was no longer working for him.

“Pete felt he was imitating himself on stage,” explained Entwistle, “like he was becoming cliché, and that’s when he wrote those songs for *The Who By Numbers*.”

In a Philadelphia hotel room during the *Quadrophenia* tour Townshend already sensed that he had painted himself in a corner.

“The Who myth is difficult to live up to,” he admitted. “What worries me about *Quadrophenia* is that it came across to me in retrospect as looking incredibly calculated, a kind of winding up of Who affairs in that era, but not really giving any indication of what’s going to happen next, I think the band has got the biggest problem ahead of them as a group. To go on with the rock and roll adolescent stuff would be so stupid.”

Townshend did not address this problem immediately, immersing himself in the exhaustive and frustrating task of recasting *Tommy* for the Ken Russell-produced film version. During the middle of filming The Who flew to New York for a disastrous series of shows at Madison Square Garden.

“It was dreadful,” said Townshend.

“They were telling us what to play. Every time I tried to make an announcement they called out ‘Let Entwistle play ‘Boris the Spider,’ and if that wasn’t bad enough, during other songs they’d all start chanting ‘Jump... jump... jump... jump!’

Townshend dark night of the soul was exacerbated by his devotion to the *laissez faire* spiritual doctrine of Meher Baba and his consequent desire to bask in the simplest truths apprehended by a content soul. His personal dilemma was more than just the pious regrets of wastrel who’d burned himself out and was looking for born-again expiation, that fast food chain of contemporary religion. Townshend was enduring a genuine spiritual crisis and working it out through his songwriting. The fact that some of the same torments haunt his songwriting as recently as *Psychoderelict* suggests that this crisis was never resolved.

Of course, Townshend wasn’t the only one questioning himself at the time-rock was facing a mid-life crisis in the 1970s as the rabble-rousers and street prophets of the 1960s were forced to a new role as middlebrow entertainers. Paul McCartney was ready with the sanitized pop-rock of *Venus And Mars*. The Rolling Stones offered reassurance that *It’s Only Rock & Roll*. Bands like Emerson, Lake and Palmer and Yes had become circus act., which is precisely what Townshend was afraid was happening to The Who. Bob Dylan looked back and saw *Blood On The Tracks*. Neil Young pulled no punches on his condemnation of heroin chic on *Tonight’s The Night*.

Even worse, those who didn’t want the new role were replaceable. Bruce Springsteen and Meatloaf were more than happy to step in. Meanwhile a new generation was poised, eager to make all the same mistakes over again. With in a year of Townshend’s angry taunt in ‘They Are All In Love’

-“Goodbye all you punks, stay young and stay high/Hand me my checkbook and I’ll crawl out to

die!” -

the Sex Pistols had undertaken a reductive assimilation of the Who myth and it was Punk Rules.

When the band went into the studio to record *The Who By Numbers*, Townshend sought to minimize friction by turning the producer’s responsibility over to Glyn Johns, whose engineering skills helped shape *Who’s Next*. Johns and the other members listened to Townshend’s intensely personal demos and set about making a Who album unlike any other.

Listening to it two decades later, *The Who By Numbers* is striking in its professionalism. The album does not attempt to approximate the band’s live sound, invent a new way to approach rock and roll or advance a world view, Nor are the songs built around the guitar power chords that provided the connection between the band’s live and recorded identity up until that point. The individual members bring strikingly competent performances to a series of extremely well-developed songs. *The Who By Numbers* subtly achieved a new standard of craftsmanship for the band, an approach which would serve it well in the years to come.



The Summit, Houston, Texas November 20, 1975
Carl L. Dunn/Photofeatures



Swansea Football Ground, June 12, 1976
Chris Walter/Photofeatures



The Who Christmas Show, Hammersmith Odeon December 21, 1975
Chris Walter/Photofeatures



New Bingley Halls, Stafford, October 3, 1975
Chris Walter/Photofeatures

On the set opener, ‘Slip Kid,’ Townshend set sustained chords against the beat in the verse arrangement and developed a beautifully understated guitar solo and an inventive coda for the song. Daltrey, whose voice had really matured since *Tommy*, delivered the vocal with a real swagger, cresting the high notes majestically.

The subject matter showed how much Townshend had been wondering about rock and roll’s ability to sustain its meaning past adolescence, and if it could, how it stacks up to other belief systems. He looks at the “*second-generation*” Slip Kid, “*a soldier at 13,*” with the knowing eyes of someone who’s stood in those shoes But in the next verse he’s “*a soldier at 63*” facing the same problem- “*There’s no easy way to be free.*”

Townshend himself sings ‘However Much I Booze’ accompanied by acoustic guitar and several overlaid, almost country-style, picked guitar parts. The lighthearted vocal draws ironic contrast to the lyric until a dark, eerie bridge puts the line “And the night comes down like a cell door closing” into dramatic focus and we find Townshend, in the middle of the night, sitting alone with a bottle, delirious, haunted by his conscience. The next day brings selective memory and Townshend’s admission of culpability, but once again the final conclusion is that there’s no way out.

Some have viewed the album as a suicide note from Townshend, underscored by a line from ‘In a Hand Or a Face’- “*Ain’t it funny how they all fire the pistol at the wrong end of the race?*” If so,

how do you account for 'Squeeze Box,' a wacky bit of comic relief that became an unlikely hit single and thus the album's most identifiable number. Townshend solos on banjo in a moment straight out of the instrument switching antics of the *Happy Jack/A Quick One* sessions.

'Dreaming From the Waist' is the most classic Who song on the record, a musical companion piece to '5:15' that struts and storms with the best moments of *Quadrophenia*. The untrammelled fury of the music, with Moon's drum rolls crashing sway and Townshend and Entwistle powering through a stunning interlace of guitar and bass lines at its climax, adds irony to a lyric that finds Townshend wishing he could master the passion that overflow the borders between hard rock posturing and naked sexual desire.

The quest for enlightenment that runs through Townshend's songwriting is much in evidence on 'Imagine a Man.' Here Townshend's goal is "*to see the end*", to understand the higher meaning he hopes all his efforts will amount to. The lyrics speak of a past too full to remember where it began, and burdens so heavy they make a man feel like an ant, references all relating to the 'weight Townshend felt he shouldered in The Who. When he started out Townshend knew what he wanted, but here he no longer remembers, longing instead for resolution.

'They Are All in Love' thrives on the contrast between the gorgeous melody, played with serene beauty by the late session piano genius Nicky Hopkins, and the bitter, almost hateful lyrics, in which Townshend has Daltrey literally give the bird to the music industry in one verse, then admits to "*recycling trash*" in the next.

Few Townshend songs reflect the depth



"Who Put The Boot In" at Celtic Football Club, Glasgow, June 5, 1976
Chris Walter/Photofeatures

of self-doubt revealed in 'How Many Friends,' a telling lament about the shallowness of friendship in the world of show business. Daltrey sings the lyric, which recounts deceptive behavior by a fan, a woman and a business manager, with a flourishing theatrical bite.

'In a Hand Or a Face' ends this unsettling album with irreconcilable statements about human pain and suffering. The image of a street person rummaging through the trash for food evokes nearly simultaneous emotions of empathy and hatred from Daltrey, who really manages to get inside the complex emotions Townshend presents here. As the song nears its end, with Moon's drums exploding a message of apocalypse punctuated by Townshend's thunderous guitar chords, the band sings the dizzying chant "*I am going round and round,*" over and over, like water being sucked down a drain.

Townshend's moods are never monochromatic, nor do his songs stick to a single message. Sandwiched in between the starkly cynical songs at the end of *The Who By Numbers* is one of the most tearfully elegant love songs he's ever written, the pantheistic hymn 'Blue Red and Grey.' in which Townshend, accompanying himself on what sounds like a ukulele, lets you know that he means it when he sings "I love every minute of the day"

Entwistle's 'Success Story,' the only non Townshend song on the album, is a terrific rocker of the kind Who fans have come to expect of The Ox. Like longtime set-opener 'Heaven and Hell' and the *Who's Next*, classic 'My Wife', 'Success Story' comes on like a fleet of Harley Davidson motorcycles and features a demolition-level bass solo.

Once again Entwistle's wry wit provides the perfect foil to Townshend's ethereal brilliance. 'Success Story-' sounds like Entwistle's ironic, working class perspective on the same lofty issues that drive Townshend to abstraction, It's almost as if he listened to Townshend's songs for *The Who By Numbers* and worked up his own parody summation of the major themes-the emptiness of the rock lifestyle, the deception of handlers, the blurred line between rock stars and religious figures.

One line in 'Success Story' does appear to summarize what The Who thought of its circumstances at the time:

"Back in the studio, to make our latest number 1, Take 276, you know this used to be fun"

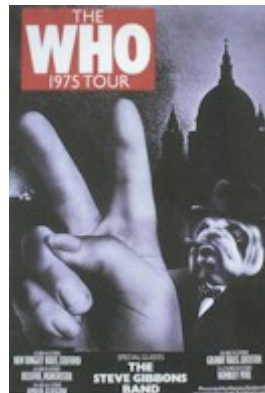
When the album was finished, none of the band members were sure of what they had on their hands. Unlike every' previous Who album, there was virtually no pressure to play this material live-only 'Dreaming From the Waist' and 'Squeeze Box' became part of the regular stage set, although 'Slip Kid' and 'However Much I Booze' were tried out briefly.

"When we got together to work on our act before touring again Pete was obviously not into it," Entwistle recalled, "So we went down to Shepperton for two days to rehearse without Roger singing, just Pete, Keith and myself playing instrumentals, all those old things. We had such a good time that we turned around completely and found ourselves playing better than we had in years."

Freed of having to re-invent themselves with the latest material, The Who found new life playing the old favorites and went on to some of the best live shows of the band's career during the 1975 and 1976 tours. Evidence of this is included on this album's bonus tracks, taken from the historic 1976 performance at Swansea Football Ground. □



Charlton Football Ground, May 31, 1976
Chris Walter/Photofeatures



The Numbers

ALL THE TRACKS on *The Who By Numbers* were recorded at the Shepperton Sound Stage on Ronnie Lane's mobile studio during April and May of 1975. Recording began with a jam session on April 4, continued throughout May and overdubs were done in June. Mixing was done at Island Records' Basing Street Studios in London's Notting Hill during July and August.

SLIP KID

(Pete Townshend) © 1975 Towser Tunes Inc. (adm. by Longitude Music Co.) BMI

'Slip Kid' was tried on stage but quickly abandoned, though Pete has subsequently performed the song on his solo appearances. 'Slip Kid' was recorded on May 30.

HOWEVER MUCH I BOOZE

(Pete Townshend) © 1975 Towser Tunes Inc. (adm. by Longitude Music Co.) BMI

Like 'Slip Kid', 'However Much I Booze' was tried on stage but soon abandoned. Recorded on May 7.

SQUEEZE BOX

(Pete Townshend) © 1975 Towser Tunes Inc. (adm. by Longitude Music Co.) BMI

Often played on stage, 'Squeeze Box' was released as a single in January 1976. It reached #10 in the U.K. charts and #16 in the U.S. Recorded on May 30.

DREAMING FROM THE WAIST

(Pete Townshend) © 1975 Towser Tunes Inc. (adm. by Longitude Music Co.) BMI

Aside from 'Squeeze Box', 'Dreaming From The Waist' was the only track from *The Who By Numbers* to be played regularly on stage, where it gained eminence as a vehicle for John's extraordinary bass playing. Originally titled 'Control Myself', and recorded in May.

IMAGINE A MAN

(Pete Townshend) © 1975 Towser Tunes Inc. (adm. by Longitude Music Co.) BMI

Released on May 29.

SUCCESS STORY

(John Entwistle) © 1975 Hot Red Music-BMI

Recorded on May 23.

THEY ARE ALL IN LOVE

(Pete Townshend) © 1975 Towser Tunes Inc. (adm. by Longitude Music Co.) BMI

Originally titled 'She Loves Everyone' and recorded on April 30. Nicky Hopkins plays piano.

BLUE, RED AND GREY

(Pete Townshend) © 1975 Towser Tunes Inc. (adm. by Longitude Music Co.) BMI

Recorded in May. This track features Pete singing solo accompanied by himself on ukulele, together with John on brass playing his own silver band arrangement. A group version of 'Blue Red And Grey' was also recorded but unfortunately the tapes of this have gone missing.

HOW MANY FRIENDS

(Pete Townshend) © 1975 Towser Tunes Inc. (adm. by Longitude Music Co.) BMI

Recorded on May 28.

IN A HAND OR A FACE

(Pete Townshend) © 1975 Towser Tunes Inc. (adm. by Longitude Music Co.) BMI

Originally titled 'Round And Round', and recorded on May 27.

SQUEEZE BOX (LIVE)

(Pete Townshend) © 1975 Towser Tunes Inc. (adm. by Longitude Music Co.) BMI

This version recorded live at Swansea Football Ground on June 12, 1976. Previously unreleased.

BEHIND BLUE EYES (LIVE)

(Pete Townshend) © 1975 Towser Tunes Inc. (adm. by Longitude Music Co.) BMI

From the album *Who's Next* This version recorded live at Swansea Football Ground on June 12, 1976.

Previously unreleased.

DREAMING FROM THE WAIST (LIVE)

(Pete Townshend) © 1975 Towser Tunes Inc. (adm. by Longitude Music Co.) BMI

This version recorded live at Swansea Football Ground on June 12, 1976. Previously only available on the box set *Thirty Years Of Maximum R&B*, released June 1994.

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